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S E C R E T AMMAN 008686

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KMPI](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: JORDAN AND SYRIA DISCUSS BORDER DISPUTE

REF: AMMAN 7201

Classified By: CDA David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d).

[11.](#) (S) Summary: Foreign Minister Muasher informed us October 18 that joint Syria-Jordan border committee discussions were focused now on possible land swaps to satisfy Syrian concerns about the fate of the 1,000 Syrian nationals living in Syrian-occupied Jordanian territory. The Jordanian-Syrian committee will continue discussions. End Summary.

[12.](#) (U) Local and international Arab dailies recently claimed that Jordan and Syria were close to resolving their long-standing border dispute. Jordanian daily Al Dustour reported October 15 that both countries had agreed in principle to withdraw their forces to the demarcation line drawn by the French and British in 1923. Syrian Economy and Trade Minister Dr. Amir Lutfi was quoted in Arabic daily al-Arab al-Yawm October 12 as saying that Syria's occupation of Jordanian territory was "unintentional" and that the border dispute would be resolved "very soon." Lufti further stated that a ministerial-level meeting was being planned following Ramadan (which ends on/about November 13) to discuss the border and other issues of "mutual cooperation."

[13.](#) (S) FM Muasher told A/S Burns and Charge October 18 that the joint Syrian-Jordanian border committee had met recently (with more meetings to come), but that negotiations were not complete. According to Muasher, the focus of negotiations is on a recently raised concern about an estimated 1,000 Syrian nationals living in Syrian-occupied Jordanian territory. Jordanian officials see this concern as either an effort to throw another obstacle in the path of agreement or as an unwarranted bid for Jordanian compensation. However, Muasher said, the committee is considering possible land swaps, to include 2.5 square kilometers of Syrian territory occupied by Jordan, to help prevent displacement of inhabitants in the disputed region. Muasher said the King wanted to move quickly to resolve the issue, while Syria is feeling U.S. and international pressure. DAO septel will report a more pessimistic read-out on the joint talks from Jordanian military participants.

[14.](#) (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

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HALE